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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1154

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01552

FOR ARA ABRAMS; INR ABRAMOWITZ
DEPT PLEASE PASS NSC FOR SORZANO

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL CU VE

SUBJECT: CUBA AFTER CASTRO -- ARE WE READY?

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: THIS CABLE ASKS THE QUESTION: "IS THE UNITED STATES PREPARED FOR A SUDDEN CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN CUBA?" IT DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, NOR DOES IT SPECULATE ON THE PROBABILITY OF SUCH AN EVENT. IT ALSO DOES NOT PROPOSE COURSES OF ACTION DESIGNED TO BRING THAT EVENT ABOUT. IT DOES SUGGEST THE USG ESTABLISH A STUDY GROUP TO CONSIDER OUR OPTIONS IN SUCH AN EVENTUALITY, AS UNLIKELY AS IT MAY APPEAR TO BE AT THIS TIME.

13. ALTHOUGH "EXPERTS" HAVE BEEN PREDICTING CASTRO'S DOWNFALL FOR ABOUT 29 YEARS, THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT HE WILL NOT LAST FOREVER. IF IT IS TRUE THAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN CUBA ARE VERY BAD AND CONTINUING TO DETERIORATE; IF RECENT HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES DEFECTORS ARE INDICATIVE OF A COLLAPSE OF THE "NOMENKLATURA"; IF CASTRO'S AGE BEGINS TO TAKE ITS TOLL, COULD WE BE SEEING THE BEGINNING OF THE END? MAYBE NOT, BUT, IF SO, ARE WE READY TO SEIZE WHAT MAY BE A FLEETING OPPORTUNITY BROUGHT ABOUT, FOR EXAMPLE, BY A MILITARY COUP, AS FAR-FETCHED AS THAT IDEA SEEMS RIGHT NOW? IT COULD BE A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT TO STUDY OUR OPTIONS, INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, THE QUESTION OF WHAT COULD BE CALLED THE "DENAZIFICATION" OF CUBA. THE U.S. HAS HAD PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH "EXORCISING" OTHER SOCIETIES OF MILITARIZED, HATE-FILLED IDEOLOGIES WHICH MAINTAINED THEMSELVES IN POWER BY TERROR AND BRUTALITY. HAVE WE EXAMINED, ON THE ONE HAND, THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NAZI GERMANY, FASCIST ITALY AND JAPAN, AND CUBA ON THE OTHER? IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE AND CERTAINLY MORE THAN SIMPLY AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE. STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED IN HISTORY, THAT A TYRANNY SUDDENLY CEASES TO EXIST, DUE TO INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL CAUSES. IF THAT HAPPENS IN CUBA, ARE WE PREPARED TO WORK QUICKLY WITH WHATEVER CUBANS INSIDE THE ISLAND MAY BE WILLING TO DETACH HER FROM THE SOVIET BLOC BEFORE HARD-LINE COMMUNISTS AND CASTROITES CAN SUCCESSFULLY REACT? IF WE ARE, CAN WE SUSTAIN THE EFFORT BY BEGINNING A PROCESS OF UNDOING NEARLY THIRTY YEARS OF BRAIN-WASHING AND PROPAGANDA?

14. WE COULD EXAMINE OUR EXPERIENCE IN A MINOR BUT MORE RECENT AND STILL RELEVANT CASE: GRENADA. WERE WE READY FOR A SUDDEN CHANGE IN GRENADA IN 1983? ALTHOUGH THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE DIFFERENT, DID WE MAKE OUR TASK EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT BY OUR ADVANCE PLANS OR LACK THEREOF? WHAT WAS OUR EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST FEW WEEKS AND MONTHS AFTER THE RESCUE MISSION? HOW WOULD IT HAVE WORKED IN THE CASE OF A SPANISH-SPEAKING COUNTRY WITH 30 YEARS OF COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP INSTEAD OF 4 YEARS? ALTHOUGH AN INVASION OR OCCUPATION OF CUBA BY U.S. FORCES IS NOT AT ALL LIKELY, IT COULD BE THAT, FOR EXAMPLE, UNDER A SCENARIO OF A SUCCESSFUL COUP BY CUBAN MILITARY OFFICERS FOLLOWING, LET'S SAY A CASTRO HEART ATTACK, THAT THE PROVISIONAL CUBAN GOVERNMENT WOULD ASK THE USG FOR ALL TYPES OF

ASSISTANCE. IF WE ARE NOT READY TO RESPOND IMMEDIATELY, A COUNTER-COUP COULD BE LAUNCHED. THE FATE OF CUBA FOR ANOTHER 30 YEARS COULD THUS BE DECIDED IN A MATTER OF HOURS, WITH THE CORRESPONDING CONSEQUENCES FOR U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY. HOW MUCH HAS A COMMUNIST BASE NINETY MILES FROM FLORIDA COST US IN THE PAST THREE DECADES? EVEN IF THERE IS NO VIOLENT RESISTANCE TO THE "NEW" CUBAN GOVERNMENT, ARE WE PREPARED TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY ECONOMIC (E.G., FOOD, OIL) AND OTHER HELP WHICH THE NEW GOVERNMENT--ASSUMING, OF COURSE, THAT IT IS PRN-US--SEEKS?

15. A WASHINGTON-BASED TASK FORCE OR STUDY GROUP CONSISTING OF THE PRINCIPAL USG AGENCIES WITH KNOWLEDGE OF CUBA, AUGMENTED BY CONSULTANTS INCLUDING TRUSTWORTHY CUBANS AND AMERICANS SUCH AS LONG-TIME EXILES, RECENT DEFECTORS, ACADEMICS, AND PERSONS FAMILIAR WITH ISSUES SUCH AS "DE NAZIFICATION" IN POST WWII GERMANY, COULD PREPARE AN ACTION PLAN WHICH COULD SAVE THE UNITED STATES MUCH COST AND SUFFERING IN THE EVENTUALITY OF A SUDDEN CHANGE IN CUBA.

REICH